

The Still Ocean

by misscam

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Summary: Footloose is found drifting in the ocean, but Rachel refuses to believe Frank is dead. Is she blinded by grief, or is she right, and Frank is still out there?

The Still Ocean

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The Still Ocean Part One

>By Camilla Sandman<a>

>
Disclaimer: Since we're pretending they are mine, we don't really need a disclaimer.

>Um, Hal why are you talking to your lawyer???

> *****

>It was a sunny, warm day when they told her.

>The day before it had rained and rained and rained, with high waves washing against the shore and strong winds. She'd woken in the middle of the night for no particular reason.. and as soon as she saw the time was 3.03 a.m., she went back to bed. She woke to sun and birds singing.

>It was a sunny, warm day when they told her Frank was missing.

>*****

>The sun was pouring from the window as Detective Rachel Goldstein looked up to see Helen Blakemore stare down at her with an unreadable expression.

>"Helen? Is there sumthinâ€|?" she worriedly asked.

>"Rachel.. There's some bad newsâ€|Iâ€|"

>"What Helen?" she asked again, feeling a bit of fear creeping into her voice.

>"We got some news from Brisbane.. They found Footloose floating in the harbor.. and Rach.. there's no sign of Frank."

>And at that moment, Rachel Goldstein felt her world shatter into pieces around her. She thought it had that day when he had left her on the pier, sailing into some bloody sunrise, but it was nothing

compared to the feeling of absolute desperation that hit her now.

>Her auto-pilot kicked in.

>Without a word to Helen she got up, and marched right into Hawker's office. He looked up at her questioningly, but as soon as he saw her expression, he knew Helen had told her.

>"I need some time off," Rachel simply said, but it wasn't a request. It was a demand.

>"Look, Rachelâ€¦"

>"I need some time off!" she repeated, this time a hint of anger had crawled into her voice. Aside from that she seemed calm, collected.

>"Okay, you've had some time coming, and there is no pressing cases. Check in with Jack, heâ€¦"

>"Yeah, thanks," she snapped back, and was out of the door before he could finish the sentence.

>She cleaned her desk, told Jack she would be away for a while, and dodged his questions about why. All the time going purely on auto-pilot, not allowing herself to feel anything.

>Heisnotdead-heisnotdead-heisnotdead her auto-pilot firmly told her.

>
He couldn't be dead. She would kick his teeth in if he was!

>

>
She took the first plane she could find to Brisbane. It felt strange being there, everything there seemed to be a reminder of him. She pushed that fact into the tiniest corner of her mind though, focusing on the main agenda.

>
She was going to find him. There was no question about it. She was gonna find him, and kick his ass for being such a fool.

>
Everyone at the station had understood why she had gone.. maybe except Jack. And they had all looked at her with a plea in their eyes: Find him.

>
And she was going to. She was! Because he was alive. She wouldn't allow him to be dead.

>
She was greeted in Brisbane by a Detective Sam Winters, a tall young redheaded guy who told her he was the investigating officer. Hawker had apparently made some calls on her behalf, and she silently thanked him.

>
The boat had just been found floating, the Detective told her. There was no sign of any violence.

>
She demanded to see the boat. He agreed.

>
It felt strange to gaze upon Footloose again. Neatly tied up to the pier, she almost expected Frank to jump up and greet her. And the boat was as she remembered it. She soon found herself wandering below deck, looking around, feeling his presence.

>
It was clean and neat, the only thing out of place was a photograph lying on the table, as if it had been tossed there. She picked it up.. and stared.

>
It was of her and Frank, taken at one of the annual Christmas parties. He was holding an arm around her shoulder, and both were grinning madly. They had gotten so drunk that nightâ€¦

>
And suddenly the memories were too vivid to shut out.

>
He was smiling at her as he was backing her into a corner. She tried to push the image away, but it stayed firmly in place. Tears were threatening to emerge.

>
"Damn you Frank! Damn you!" she yelled, clutching onto the picture.

>
The boat had no answers.
>
"Detective Goldstein?"
>
"Yeah?" she replied, turning to look at the young Brisbane detective.
>
"We checked the boat throughfully. There's no sign of criminal activity. He could have been washed overboardâ€|"
>
"No," she snapped back.
>
"It was rough weather that night," the guy pointed out.

>
"He DIDN'T fall overboard!" she insisted, and the young guy was smart enough not to push the subject.
>
"Can I give you a lift?" he instead asked.
>
"No.. I.. I think I'll just stay here," she said quietly.

>
"I'll call you the moment we hear anything," the detective promised, then slipped out quietly. She didn't even look after him.

>
Instead she just sat there, feeling Frank's presence around her.

>
"I'll find you," she promised, finally letting tears fall.

>

>
She awoke with a start. The floor was rolling slightly, should floor do that? Then she remembered.. she was on the boat. After crying she'd curled up on the cot , still clutching his picture.

>
Sighing, she looked at her watch.

>
3.03 a.m.

>
Something important tried to surface in her mind. The time.. The time!

>
Every logical part of her being told her it was just a freaky coincidence, but her gut told her otherwise.

>
She had woken that night at 3.03 a.m. and that's when it had happened. Something that had caused Frank to disappear.

>
She looked at the picture again. It was strange how it had been lying so obvious on the table, everything else had been neatly tucked away. It was as if it had been placedâ€|

>
"Are you trying to tell me something, Frank?" she said aloud, trying to piece together his thoughts.

>
He obviously hadn't had time- or hadn't dared to â€" leave a real message. Instead he had left the picture, knowing it would mean something to her.. but not to anyone else.

>
So what was he trying to tell her?

>
She frowned trying to recall that night the picture had been taken. It had been a good night, they had both been in a great moodâ€| Sykes had been running around with mistletoe, snagging kisses from all the girls.. but as Sykes had gotten increasingly drunk, Frank had managed to nick the mistletoe.. and hunted down her.

>
She smiled a bit as she remembered how he had cornered her, and pulled up the mistletoe like a weapon declaring smugly that she had to kiss him.

>
She had too.. a big wet kiss in fact.. and afterwards she had thwarted him for having the nerve. He had been smug for hours though.

>
But what did any of this have to do with this?

>
She rubbed her eyes. The boat was rolling a lot! Peaking her head up, she expected to see the pier and the lights from Brisbaneâ€| Instead she saw water.. water.. and waterâ€|

>
"What the bloody hell???"

>
"Good morning miss Goldstein.." came a cheerful voice, and she turned to look at Sam Winters.

>
"What?"

>
"Your confusion is understandable.. but you see, your partner, Detective Holloway, happened to stumble across something he shouldn't have. And unfortunately, he managed to hide some evidence from usâ€¦ But I think he will be much more co-operative now."

>
She blinked. Of course! The picture had been taken right after they had solved the case with a cop taking money from a local "entrepreneur". That's what Frank had tried to tell her!

>
"We couldn't kill your partner until we had the evidence.. and now we'll get it. Nothing like a loved one in danger to open up someone's mouth."

>
"Then what?"

>
"Then you'll both meet with accidents. I'm sorry. I wish it could be otherwise."

>
She glanced around her to see that they were tied up to another boat.

>
"You sailed off hoping to find your partner.. but the storm drowned you both. The weather report is looking good.. for us that is," the detective explained.

>
A man appeared on the deck of the other boat.

>
"Take her down!"

>
"Then it looks like our meeting have come to an end, Miss Goldstein," Winter exclaimed, and took a swing at her, meaning to knock her unconscious, but she had seen it coming. She ducked, made a go for his gun and kicked his feet from the deck. He fell impressively, moaning as he hit the hard deck.

>
She wrenched away his gun, pointing it at the other guy.. who made a dive into the water. Peeking over the side she saw a rubber boat.. a fast one too. She turned to face Winters, but he was over the side too. She heard the engine start up as she ran to the other boat, jumping onto it. She shot once after the leaving rubber boat, but didn't expect to hit it in the darkness.

>
They probably assumed her and Frank wouldn't get back.. her heart jumped.

>
"Frank!" she cried out, feel panic rise. She ran below decks, flickering on the light.. and stopped dead in her tracks.

>
It was him. Bruised, bloody, quite pale.. and with his eyes closed.

>
"Frank!" she called out as she ran to his side, feeling for a pulse. She breathed a sigh of relief when she felt strong heartbeats against her fingertips. And he was breathing.

>
"Frank?" she whispered, "Frank?"

>
His eyes flew open.

>
"Rach?" he muttered.

>
"Yeah, it's me. It's me."

>
He reached out a hand to touch her cheek, her hair, as if to see if she was really there.

>
"I dreamed you would comeâ€¦"

>
"And I have. Now I'm getting you out of there."

>
"There's a bomb.. on the boat.. I heard them talk about it."

>
She froze for a second, all the joy of seeing him again turning to fear.. that it was too late.

>
"Come on!" she urged a second later, helping him get up. He winced of pain, and leaned heavily on her as they slowly got up on the deck.

>
"Footloose?" he muttered, seeing the boat tied to the one they were on.

>
"Yeah.. come on!"

>
She helped him onto the deck of Footloose, then fiddle with the rope tying them to the other boat.

>
"Damnit!" she yelled, before it finally went off, and they started to drift away. She was going for the engine.. as she felt the heat.

>
The explosion hit. Flames roared, she threw herself on Frank, covering him as bits of wood flew everywhere. She could hear him groan in pain under her.

>
The heat was intense for a second, flaming bits going everywhere, but rain was pouring from the sky. She had never in her life been so happy for a bit of rain.

>
And the sail had caught fire, she realized, it was being quelled by the rain.. but they were obviously not going to sail away from here. The boat was shaking heavily, and she felt Frank's arms go around her waist, to hold her firmly against him.

>
"Am I dreaming?" he whispered into her ear, and she couldn't help smile at that, despite the situation they were in.

>
"No."

>
"Too bad, in my dreams ya kiss me at this point."

>
She snorted, but a cracking sound from the mast caught any reply short. They both looked up.

>
"If the mast goesâ€|" he began, and she nodded.

>
"The radio is gone," she added, looking at the smoking remains.

>
"The weather is not looking too good," he remarked.

>
"Shit!" she exclaimed, rolling away from him and getting up.

>
The other boat was only smoking remains.. half of which were scattered across the Footloose. Half of the other boats mast had crushed the engine.. it was a miracle they were still floating.

>
"Coulda been a better rescue," he remarked dryly.

>
"Frank!" she warned, giving him a glare. He got up slowly, wincing at the pain.

>
"So the sail is a gonner.. no engine.. dead radio.. we're basically stuck here," he stated.

>
"Aw, shit!" She let her gaze wander from the engine.. to the radio.. to the mast, still cracking dangerously, and then to Frank, where she let her gaze linger.

>
"Not the perfect reunion, ey?" he asked, smiling a bit. She shook her head.

>
"Come on," she said, leading him below deck. They were both drenched.

>
"What happened Frank?" she asked as she helped him sit down on the small cot.

>
"Short version?"

>
"Yeah," she replied, looking for something to dry away the blood with.

>
"I arrived in Brisbane.. found out that the boat next to me was doing some illegal business. Cop part got the better of me.. I managed to get some pictures.. I mailed it to the Station. They should get it. I hoped.. you would understand.. Ouch!"

>
"Sorry," she said, cleaning away the last bit of blood from his cheek.

>
"Rach.." he said, taking her hand and looking her in the eyes.

>
"I heard them talking earlierâ€¦ There's a cyclone coming.. and.." he stopped, unsure of how to continue.
>
"I know," she whispered.
>
"When the storm hitsâ€¦ We'll be helpless.. I'm sorryâ€¦"

>
"It's not your fault, Frank."
>
"I'm the one who sailed off," he noted miserably, looking down at his hands.
>
"Hush," she whispered. "Frank, ever since you left.. I've had one regret. I.. did want that night."
>
"Rach.. ya have no idea how much I wanted it. When Mick knocked at that door.."
>
"I know. We may not have tomorrow.. but we have now. We have a little time.."
>
He reached out to touch her cheek, her hair, her lips.

>
"I love you," he said seriously.
>
"I know," she whispered, then raised her voice. "I know! And if ya don't kiss me right now, Francis James Holloway, then I'll.."

>
"Then you'll what?" he asked, leaning in.
>
"I'll..." she began, but the rest fell dead on her lips as he finally kissed her. He was gentle.. her upper lip was still a bit bruised, and he kissed it with little butterfly kisses, ever-so-gentle. It was her who pushed herself onto his lap and deepened the kiss. He let his arms linger on her waist, while hers went to his hair and his neck.
>
It was the kind of kiss usually accompanied by fireworks in the sky, or a beautiful sunrise with birds singing. When they finally broke it off, they were both out of breath.
>
"Wow," he muttered, letting his cheek rest against hers, feeling how warm they were. He resisted passing a remark about how "hot" he made herâ€¦ This was NOT the time, he figured.
>
"Rach.. If we.. I mean, if the storm.."
>
"Hush," she said gently. "No promises about tomorrow. If tomorrow comes.."
>
"If," he agreed, kissing her neck, her cheeks, her ears.

>
And then they both heard it. The roar of the ocean.
>
"Hold me?" she asked, and he put his arms around her protectively, holding onto her with his very life.

>
The storm was upon them.
>

>
The ocean was still the day after when they found the rig of the Footloose drifting south of Brisbane. It had been a strong storm, several ships ended up as shipwrecks. One by one the missing ships were pulled out of the waterâ€¦ some with survivors, some without. But there was no sign of Footloose. Just the still, still ocean.

>

>
The Still Ocean Part Two

>
By Camilla Sandman

>
Disclaimer: Since we're pretending they are mine, we don't really need a disclaimer.

>Um, Hal why are you talking to your lawyer???

>Author's Note: Here's the sequelâ€¦

>Summary: The storm has settled, but there is no sign of our beloved dynamic duo.. have the ocean given them a watery grave, or are both â€" or just one of them still alive?

>*****

>It was a still ocean that morning.

>Helen woke early, and sensed that something had happened. Jack hadn't slept, and had a feeling something was wrong. Jeff got the package.. and knew something was terribly, terribly wrong.

>It was a still ocean that morning who offered no answers.

>*****

>"Helen, Jack, in my office now!" Hawker called as soon as they entered the building. "What's going on?"

>"Can't be good news..." Helen said quietly.

>"I got this in the mail this morning," the chief exclaimed, and pulled up a series of photographs.

>"It's from Frank."

>Helen and Jack leaned down to have a closer look. All the photographs showed a boat. On some a young redheaded guy was talking to an older man.. and receiving money from him.

>"That's Sam Winters! I know him!" Jack said, studying the pictures closely.

>"And this picture is particularly interesting," Jeff said, pointing to one in the middle.

>"Drugs," Helen sighed, "Frank must have stumbled upon it."

>"Anyone heard anything from Rachel?"

>"No," they both said in unison.

>"Helen.. Find Rachel! Jack, I want you to get in touch with the Brisbane Police.. find out as much as you can about this Sam Winters. Get going!"

>As they practically ran out of his office, Jeff Hawker gazed down at the photographs and sighed.

>"Where are you Frank?" he asked, but the silence offered no answers.

>*****

>Cold. He was cold. And he was wet. Terribly wet.

>"Frank?" a voice called out, and he struggled to open his eyes

>"I'm cold," he whispered.

>"I know Frank, but just hang on, okay? Hang on for me. Can you do that?"

>He finally managed to open his eyes to look into the face of an angel.

>"Hey you," she whispered.

>"Heyâ€|" His voice felt heavy, it was hard getting the words out.

>"Wh-what happened?" he whispered, feeling her warm hands wander across his face.

>"There was a storm.. We were on the Footloose.. you remember?"

>"Footloose?" he repeated, searching his mind for a clue why that name should mean anything to him.

>"The boat," she reminded him and he lifted his gaze to see they were indeed on a boat.. or what remind of it. And they were floating on the wide, wide ocean, no sign of land. She had wrapped them both in what remained of the sail, and she was holding him close. His gaze drifted back to her face.

>"I wanna sleepâ€|"

>"No, Frank, no, just please, please talk to me."

>"Hmmmâ€|"

>"Come on Frank!" she urged desperately, planting kisses on his forehead.

>"Don't stop" he muttered.

>"I won't," she promised, "I won't let you go."

>But his lips felt so cold against hers, and all she could see was the still ocean.

>*****

>"Jeff?"

>Jeff Hawker looked up to see Helen standing in the doorway.

>"Yes?"

>"Footloose has gone missing. And no one has seen Rachel since yesterday."

>"What about this Sam Winters guy?"

>"They've taken him into custody, so far he's saying nothing. But Jeff.. he was the one who greeted Rachel on the airport."

>He rubbed his eyes.

>"One of us should go up there" she continued.

>"I am," he said abruptly, "they're my detectives. I'm going."

>"Be careful," she warned. The last thing they needed was another missing copper.

>*****

>She felt herself beginning to drift. It was so cold, so very cold, and she was so tired. Frank had drifted into unconsciousness, but he was still breathing, and she let his head rest on her chest.

>"Frank" she whispered quietly, stroking his hair.

>"I just want you to know," she continued, "that I love you. And if you die on me, I'm gonna be very, very angry with you, do ya understand?"

>She looked at him, he looked so peaceful, so innocent..

>"I'll take that as a yes then," she said after a few seconds silence. And she wrapped herself even more firmly around him as she drifted into utter darkness.

>*****

>"We've found the mast," the Brisbane police chief explained as Hawker stepped onto the police boat at Brisbane harbor.

>"We have also apprehended Detective Winters, but so far he's been uncooperative."

>"And no sign of the boat itself?" Hawker asked.

>"No, afraid not. The cyclone can have thrown them miles of course.. if they survived. It's a big ocean. They could be anywhere."

>"Have you worked out their last known position?"

>"Yes. We're heading out there now."

>*****

>He was dreaming. An angel was holding him close, warming him. And they were floating on a sky that were rocking them asleep. He was at peace. And this angel of his was so beautiful..

>But there was that noise. A loud noise, growing louder by the minute. An engine?

>*****

>"We've found them!"

>"Are they alive?"

>"Unknown."

>*****

>Voices. Voices were talking to her.

>"Rachel? Rachel, can you hear me?"

>"Jeff?" she muttered.

>"Yeah."

>"Fr-Frank?" she gasped, trying to open her eyes.

>"He's alive. Just relax. We're getting you out of here."

>She smiled. Everything was going to be alright now. Everything was going to be alright.

>An she drifted back into the blessed darkness.

>*****

>The next time she awoke, she felt warm.. comfortable. And she opened her eyes to look at Jeff Hawker.

>"Rachel?"

>"No, the Easter Bunny," she joked.

>"Glad to have you back with us, Detective." She nodded drowsily, then bolted upwards.

>"Frank!"

>"Don't worry, he's just across the hall."

>"I need to see him."

>"Are you sure you're up to it?" he asked worried.

>"What are you, my mother?" she snapped.

>"No, your boss," he replied, but helped her up from bed and let her lean on him as she staggered into Frank's room.

>He opened his eyes as soon as she entered.

>"Hey, angel," he smiled.

>"I'll just be outside," Hawker reported, then slipped out quietly.

>"We're an amazing team, you know that?" Frank asked her as she slowly approached the bed.

>"The best," she replied, and as she reached the bed, she took his hand. He smiled up at her.

>"I owe you one, Goldie," he said earnestly.

>"Actually you owe me about a hundred," she smirked.

>"Umm.. will you take payment in kisses?" She snorted, but didn't resist when he pulled her head down to lip-lock.

>"I think I'm still dreamin," he laughed when they finally came up for air. She thwarted him playfully.

>"You're a jerk," she grinned.

>"But an irresistible jerk, huh?" She shook her head, but the smile stayed.

>"Tomorrow did come," she whispered after a few seconds silence, and he reached up to pull her into a hug.

>"Yes, it did," he replied, "this means we're going to have that talk?"

>She sighed.

>"Yeah. But not know. Just hold me nowâ€¦". He wrapped her more firmly into his arms.

>"Ya know.. There's room enough for two in this bed," he teased.

>"Francis! Hawker's just outside!"

>"We could be real quietâ€¦!"

>"Somehow.. I doubt that."

>*****

>Night came, and silence embraced the hospital.

>Frank was sleeping peacefully and dreaming good dreams, as someone entered his room.

>The figure stood in the doorway for a few seconds, the tip-toed to the bed.

>Frank shifted in his sleep.

>The figure looked at him once more, the pulled up a gun.

>Rachel was asleep too, dreaming happily for the first time in ages.

>But a sound tore her from her asleep. At first she didn't realize what it was, then she knew.

>It was the sound of a gunshot.

>The Still Ocean Part Three
By Camilla Sandman
>
Disclaimer: Since we're pretending they are mine, we don't
really need a disclaimer.
>Um, Hal why are you talking to your lawyer???

>Author's Note: â€| and finally, here's the last part.

>Summary: Now what??

>*****

>The sound of a gunshot.

>It had been a peaceful night where everyone had breathed a sigh of
relief, and basked in joy of getting a happy ending. For now. But it
would take only one sound to turn joy to grief.

>The sound of a gunshot tore the illusion apart.

>*****

>"FRAAAAAANK!!" Rachel screamed as she bolted out of bed, ran across
the hall and into his room. He looked asleep. And for a blissful
second she thought it was just a nightmare, that everything were
going to be alright.

>Then she saw the blood.

>"Noooo! No, no, no, no, no," she cried out, just staring at the
blood pouring from a headwound.

>"Frank, no, no.. Frankâ€|.. "

>Nurses rushed in.

>"We need a doctor in here ASAP!"

>And suddenly she felt Jeff's arms around her, but she jerked away,
still staring at the blood.

>Had she come this far only to loose him?

>*****

>How long Frank was in surgery, she had no idea. Time had no meaning
for her as she sat in the hallway, just staring at a point in the
wall.

>Jeff was there too, but she hardly noticed.

>And finally the doctor came out.

>"Miss Goldstein?"

>"Yes.. How is he?"

>"We managed to get the bullet out. He's been very lucky, there is no
swelling. We're optimistic."

>"He's gonna be fine then?"

>"We're fairly optimisticâ€|"

>"Fairly optimistic??!"

>"Yes. But there is no guarantees. With head injuries we can never be
sure."

>She let herself sink onto the floor, her back against the hospital
wall. Hawker looked down at her worried, but she just waved him
off.

>"Just find who did this.. Justâ€|"

>He nodded, then stalked off, determined to get the bastard who had
done it.

>Only then did she cry.

>*****

>"We have Winters in custody, and he has been here all nightâ€|.. "

>"Then find who he is working with! One of my detectives have been
shot, and I'd like to know by whom!" Hawker shouted, then took a deep
breath to calm himself.

>"I'm sorry about your detectiveâ€|"

>"He's one of the best I've hadâ€|"

>"I understand, butâ€|.. "

>"I don't think you do! If he dies, I'll not only loose him, but

another one of my finest detectives. I will not allow that! So get Winters talking!"

>"Yes, sir!"

>*****

>"Rachel?" It was Helen's voice.

>"Helen?" she asked, looking up. It was Helen, looking down at her with compassion in her eyes.

>"How is he?"

>"They don't know for sureâ€¦ I just got him back. I can't loose him again. I can't!" she exclaimed, letting herself be pulled into a hug.

>"I know Rachel.. he'll be alright. He'll be alright."

>"Do they know who did this?"

>"No.. I didn't see anyone.. Hang onâ€¦!"

>She saw herself run into Frank's room, freeze, cry out.. and then the nurses rushed in. The nursesâ€¦

>"It was one of the nurses, Helen!"

>"How do you know?"

>"That's the only way the person could have hidden from me in the hallway.. I was there in a matter of seconds!"

>"Okay.. do you remember how they looked?"

>"Sort of.. Yeah, yeah I remember."

>"Okay. We're gonna find who did this, andâ€¦!" her phone interrupted her.

>"Blakemore," she said, getting up.

>"Yeah, listen, it's Hawker. Winters have a girlfriend working in the hospital."

>"I figured as much. Rachel reckons one of the nurses may have done it," and with that she turned to look at Rachel.. only Rachel wasn't there.

>"Shit! I'm gonna hafta call you back. Rachel just disappeared on me."

>"You don't think sheâ€¦?"

>"In her condition.. I dunno Jeff."

>*****

>The young blonde nurse who had avoided her gaze. It had to be her. Rachel was sure of it. So she walked fast down the hallways, scanning for the known face.

>And finally.. she saw her.

>Their gazes locked from across the hall, the young nurse with a look of terrified regoniztion. The she ran.

>Rachel ran after, as fast as she could, feeling pure hatred flow into her veins.

>"Hold it!" she cried out, and she heard someone running after her too. It had to be Helen.

>She caught up with the nurse just as they reached the stairs, knocking her onto the floor.

>"Youâ€¦!.." she whispered hatefully, making the nurse twist in fear.

>"I didn't mean to.. but he was gonna put my Sam away.. I had to.. I had toâ€¦!"

>"Rachel!" came Helen's voice. "Don't be stupid. We have her now."

>"She shot Frank!"

>"He could still make it.. Don't do this. Frank wouldn't want you to."

>Slowly, she got up, and staggered into the hallway. She could hear Helen read the rights for the nurse, and a sense of closure filled her.

>It wasn't over though. It wouldn't be over until she could gaze into

his eyes again.

>*****

>The only sound in the room was the monitors. She stood in the doorway a while, afraid to go near the bed. Finally, she took a deep breath, and marched up to him.

>"Hey Frank," she said, then paused, unsure of how to continue.

>"Eh.. Iâ€¦ I don't know what to say Frank. Justâ€¦ come back to me. We still haven't had that talk, andâ€¦"

>He looked so fragile in the bed, his head all bandaged, wires and tubes everywhere.

>"Please?" she pleaded, then lifted her gaze to the roof.

>"Hmmm?"

>"Frank??!!" she gasped, seeing his eyelids flicker open.

>"Hmâ€¦" he muttered.

>"Thank God! Frank, can you hear me?"

>His eyes locked onto hers, but no flicker of recognition appeared.

>"Frank?" she asked again.

>He finally spoke, but not the words she wanted to hear.

>"Who are you?" he asked and her world crashed down at her feet.

>*****

>There was a knock at the door. Then another one.

>"Rachel? You in there?" came Jack's voice.

>"Go away!" came the reply, but he pushed the door open.

>"Rachel.. you haven't been at the Station since you got back from Brisbane. We're.. worried."

>There came no reply, so he kept going, reaching the dark living room.

>"Rach?"

>"Go away Jack."

>"Frank's back."

>"Why should I care? He doesn't remember me."

>"Not by choice. And the doctors say he'll regain memory."

>"Just piss off Jack!"

>He strained to see her in the darkness, and finally spotted her by the couch. She had obviously been drinking. After getting back from Brisbane she had refused to speak to anyone, and he had a feeling why.

>"Look.. Rachel. I just have to tell youâ€¦ I'm not your comfort prize."

>"Huh?"

>"I think.. whatever you and I have.. we can't have it as long as Frank's in the picture."

>"He's not," she said dully.

>"Yes, he is," he said, then shrugged his shoulders and left. She tossed a bottle after him, then closed her eyes.

>Frank had left, then she had found him again to nearly lose him, and now he couldn't even remember her. She wasn't sure what hurt the most.. that he didn't remember, or that he hadn't even asked her what she meant to him. She wasn't sure she could explain it though. It was.. complicated.

>There was a knock on the door again.

>"Piss off Jack!" she called, but when a second knock came, she got up, strode angrily to the door and pulled it open.

>"I thought I told youâ€|" and then she trailed off. It was Frank.

>"Heya," he said.

>"Frank?"

>"So they tell me," he replied cheerfully.

>"Justâ€| go. I'm not in the mood to play catch-up."

>"But listen, Iâ€|"

>"Noo!" she cried out, then slammed the door in his face. When she looked out a little while later, he was gone. And she fought tears desperately. She had lost him again. The house was filled with memories, and it was getting too much.

>She ran out, to the beach, where it was just her and the ocean.. and Frank.

>"I wondered how long it would take," he remarked dryly.

>"Piss off, Frank!"

>"Rachel, just listen to meâ€|" he began, walking towards her.

>"No," she whispered, keeping her eyes at the sea. She refused herself to feel any hope, for it would be snatched away from her.

>"Just listen, okay, just.. I think I rememberâ€|"

>"What?" she asked dully

>"I remember.. how it was like to kiss you."

>She looked up at him, and met his sparkling eyes, seeing that he did indeed remember. Her heart skipped a beat.

>"You tasted a bit of salt.. from the ocean.. and your upper lip was bruised, so I wanted to be careful.. so I kissed it gently.. like this.." and with that he did indeed kiss it gently, awkward, as if he was afraid he would hurt her.

>"Frank, I'm not a porcelain doll," she remarked dryly when he pulled back.

>He grinned at her.

>"I seem to recall something else tooâ€|"

>"Yeah?"

>"I recall.. You being a great lay!"

>She thwarted him on the arm.

>"Francis James Holloway!" But even though she tried to make it sound angry, a wide grin was emerging on her face. He grinned back, feeling ridiculously happy.

>"I bet Hawker had no idea what we were doing," he grinned.

>"No thanks to you, loud mouth!" she laughed, then she turned serious.

>"About that talk..."

>"Yeah?" he asked

>"How about we have it.. at my place.. after breakfast?"

>"And just what do we do in the meantime?"

>"I'm sure we can think of something," she teased.

>He grinned, then leaned forward to gaze into her eyes.

>"Me and you.. It'll be so simple, Rach, just you wait and see," he promised.

>"Welcome home, Frank," she whispered, and let herself be pulled into his arms.

>And the ocean was still as they walked into the morning.

>*****

>The End...

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>

End
file.